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# Leading Ideas



## | Tips for Strengthening Adult Education

By Ann A. Michel On December 3, 2008

Leading Ideas

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How can your church offer a strong and inviting program of Bible study and Christian education for adult learners? It is important to offer a variety of formats, schedules, and approaches.

“ Despite their best intentions, ongoing groups have a tendency to become cliquish. Newcomers are far more likely to feel comfortable joining something new.

Here are some suggestions:

- Experiment with a variety of times — Sunday morning classes, weeknight groups, retreats, one-day events, and breakfast-hour or noon-time classes — depending on lifestyles in your congregation. Consider scheduling some classes or small groups in homes or other community locations.
- Start new studies and groups often. Despite their best intentions, ongoing groups have a tendency to become cliquish. Newcomers are far more likely to feel comfortable joining something new.
- Recognize different learning styles among individuals and age groups. Older folks tend to be most comfortable with traditional classroom structures. Boomers are inclined to question authority and enjoy discussion. Younger persons are more accustomed to media and technology and prefer a fast-paced, informal style.

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question in a sermon

*If people knew how m  
to give more themse*

Want more *Right Question  
Leaders.*

- Make use of a variety of different approaches, including lectionary-based studies, topical studies, character studies, etc. Incorporate different learning strategies, such as role playing, dramatization, guided meditation, even memorization. Churches too small for a large number of groups can vary their approach by rotating different studies and curricula with groups.
- Recognize that "homework" can be a turn-off. Use videos, in-class readings, dramatizations, or audio tapes as alternative ways of getting everyone "on the same page" and ready for discussion, all the while encouraging the habit of daily scripture reading.
- Encourage active, discussion-based learning. Break into small conversation groups frequently. Allow for diversity in perspectives.
- Encourage the use of a variety of different biblical translations. Those less experienced in Bible study may find it helpful to read from a contemporary translation or paraphrase, such as *The Good News Bible* or *The Message*.

These practices are from "[50 Ways to Strengthen Adult Education](#)," part of the Lewis Center's popular *50 Ways to Build Strength* series that provides practical, actionable strategies for improving ministries that are vital to church growth. These resources are available at [www.churchleadership.com/50Ways](http://www.churchleadership.com/50Ways).

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About Author

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Ann A. Michel is associate director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary and teaches in the areas of stewardship and leadership. She is also the author of *Synergy: A Leadership Guide for Church Staff and Volunteers* (Abingdon, 2017), available at [Cokesbury](#) and [Amazon](#).

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